

THE YALE REVIEW

A NATIONAL QUARTERLY



JANUARY 1921

Germany Since the Revolution	<i>The Author of "J'accuse"</i>
Zionism To-Day	<i>Israel Zangwill</i>
A Group of Poems	<i>Robert Frost</i>
The Masterful Puritan	<i>Agnes Repplier</i>
Robert Louis Stevenson in Samoa	<i>W. E. Clarke</i>
Religion in England after the War	<i>W. R. Inge</i>
Women in the Election	<i>A. Maurice Low</i>
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The Permanent Utility of Dialect	<i>Brander Matthews</i>
The Shepherds' Field. <i>Verse</i>	<i>Edward Bliss Reed</i>
In the Hunger Districts	<i>Edith Hoyt</i>
Professional Schools of Liberal Education	<i>Archibald MacLeish</i>
Lies and Liars	<i>Raphael Demos</i>
The Problem of the American Negro	<i>Franz Boas</i>
Some Novels of 1920	<i>Wilbur Cross</i>
Among the New Books	

Edited by WILBUR CROSS

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Robert Frost

to
Louis Mumford

A GROUP OF POEMS

By ROBERT FROST

Snow Dust

The way a crow
Shook down on me
The dust of snow
From a hemlock tree

Has given my heart
A change of mood
And saved some part
Of a day I had rued.

The Onset

Always the same when on a fated night
At last the gathered snow lets down as white
As maybe in dark woods and with a song
It shall not make again all winter long
Of hissing on the yet uncovered ground,
I almost stumble looking up and round,
As one who overtaken by the end
Gives up his errand and lets death descend
Upon him where he is, with nothing done
To evil, no important triumph won
More than if life had never been begun.

Yet all the precedent is on my side:
I know that winter death has never tried
The earth but it has failed: the snow may heap
In long storms an undrifted four feet deep

As measured against maple, birch, and oak;
It cannot check the Peeper's silver croak;
And I shall see the snow all go down hill
In water of a slender April rill
That flashes tail through last year's withered brake
And dead weeds like a disappearing snake.
Nothing will be left white but here a birch
And there a clump of houses with a church.

A Star in a Stone-Boat

Never tell me that not one star of all
That slip from heaven at night and softly fall
Has been picked up with stones to build a wall.

Some laborer found one faded and stone cold,
And saving that its weight suggested gold,
And tugged it from his first too certain hold,

He noticed nothing in it to remark.
He was not used to handling stars thrown dark
And lifeless from an interrupted arc.

He did not recognize in that smooth coal
The one thing palpable besides the soul
To penetrate the air in which we roll.

He did not see how like a flying thing
It brooded ant-eggs, and had one large wing,
One not so large for flying in a ring,

And a long Bird of Paradise's tail,
(Though these when not in use to fly and trail
It drew back in its body like a snail);

Nor know that he might move it from the spot—
The harm was done: from having been star shot
The very nature of the soil was hot

And burning to yield flowers instead of grain,
Flowers fanned and not put out by all the rain
Poured on them by his prayers prayed in vain.

He moved it roughly with an iron bar,
He loaded an old stone-boat with the star
And not, as you might think, a flying car,

Such as even poets would admit perforce
More practical than Pegasus the horse
If it could put a star back in its course.

He dragged it through the ploughed ground at a pace
But faintly reminiscent of the race
Of jostling rock in interstellar space.

It went for building-stone, and I as though
Commanded in a dream forever go
To right the wrong that this should have been so.

Yet ask where else it could have gone as well,
I do not know—I cannot stop to tell:
He might have left it lying where it fell.

From following walls I never lift my eye
Except at night to places in the sky
Where showers of charted meteors let fly.

Some may know what they seek in school and church,
And why they seek it there; for what I search
I must go measuring stone walls, perch on perch;

Sure that though not a star of death and birth,
So not to be compared, perhaps, in worth
To such resorts of life as Mars and Earth,—

Though not, I say, a star of death and sin,
It yet has poles, and only needs a spin
To show its worldly nature and begin

To chafe and shuffle in my calloused palm
And run off in strange tangents with my arm
As fish do with the line in first alarm.

Such as it is, it promises the prize
Of the one world complete in any size
That I am like to compass, fool or wise.

Misgiving

All crying, "We will go with you, O Wind,"
The foliage follow him, leaf and stem,
But a sleep oppresses them as they go,
And they end by bidding him stay with them.

Since ever they flung abroad in spring,
The leaves have promised themselves this flight,
Who now would fain seek sheltering wall,
Or thicket, or hollow place for the night.

And now they answer the summoning blast
With an ever vaguer and vaguer stir,
Or, at utmost, a little reluctant whirl
That drops them no further than where they were.

I only hope that when I am free,
As they are free, to go in quest
Of the knowledge beyond the bounds of life,
It may not seem better to *me* to rest.

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